Fall 2006

Interdisciplinary Research in Africa
Course number: 16:016:502

Crosslisted under:
Anthropology 524 (16:070:524)
Geography 605 (16:450:605)

Professor David McDermott Hughes
Office: 204 Cook Office Building (Cook)
Office hours: Thursdays 11:00-12:30 or by appointment
Voice mail: 732-932-9153 extension 361
Email: dhughes@aesop.rutgers.edu

The course meets Mondays 12:35-3:35 pm in 131 Blake Hall (Cook campus)

Course description
This course raises the largest question of graduate training: What kind of intellectual – engaging in what ways with readers, collaborators, and subjects – do I wish to become? We will address this question in its mundane and sublime aspects, covering ethics, methods, and one’s voice as a writer. With respect to ethics, I refer to the whole range in which one approaches people and institutions from which one want to learn. What kinds of responsibility and accountability does fieldwork engender? Do such obligations bear differently upon us in the case of poor, as opposed to rich, informants? The section on methods will deal with three kinds of data: oral, written, and materialist – a division that scrambles the conventional distinction between qualitative and quantitative data. Needless to say, all these methods entail multi-sited research. Finally, the course ends with issues of voice. How do we select our audiences and, when we write, how do we balance advocacy for and criticism of those whom we studied in the field? In what circumstances and to what end, should we write reflexively – that is, include our own actions and feelings in the narrative? This course will appeal to social scientists and historians planning Masters or Doctoral-level research. Most of the reading material will concern Africa, but – as the themes are of general relevance – non-Africanists are certainly encouraged to attend. Students who wish to improve their writing will find this course particularly useful. We will spend one hour per week revising a paragraph written by one student – an exercise that brings to life the saying “no pain, no gain.”
Reading
All the readings in the required (non-indented) parts of the syllabus are on reserve as hard copies in the Chang Library on Cook Campus. They are also all on electronic reserve. The books listed below are available for purchase at the Cook/Douglass Coop Store.


Other requirements
Each student will submit a term paper or equivalent writing project. Each student will also present the work of a fellow student in draft form on either 26 April or 3 May.

Grading
The grade rests on (1) in-class participation, (2) the presentation of reading material during one of the seminars, (3) the presentation of another student’s draft final paper at the end of the course, and (4) the student’s own final paper.

Introduction

Week 1: Getting to know each other (11 September)

Week 2: Where and what is Africa? (18 September)
Recommended:

Ethics, or the Practical Politics of Research

Week 3: Studying the less powerful (25 September)
Guest: Julie Livingston, History, Rutgers-New Brunswick
Tapela, Barbara Nompumelelo. 2006. “New architecture, old agendas: perspectives on social research in rural communities neighboring the Kruger National Park in South Africa.” Teleseminar of the Transboundary Protected Areas Research Initiative, Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg, 28 June.
Proceedings of the Transboundary Protected Areas Research Initiative (TPARI) teleseminar, 28 June 2006.

Recommended:
Week 4: Studying the more powerful (2 October)

Recommended:

Week 5: Studying institutions (9 October)
Hughes. 2006. *From Enslavement to Environmentalism.* Chapter 6,7.

Recommended:
Week 6: Studying representations (16 October)

Guest: Philip Rothwell, Spanish and Portuguese, Rutgers-New Brunswick


Recommended:


Methods

Week 7: Documentary methods (23 October) – This class will meet in David’s lab.

Hughes, David M. 2006. *From Enslavement to Environmentalism*. Introduction, Chapters 1,2,4.

Primary sources referred to in footnote 5, p. 212; footnote 6, p. 212, footnote 55, p. 215; Minutes of the Vhimba Area Development Committee. I will distribute these texts.


Recommended:


**Week 8: Oral methods (30 October) – This class will meet in David’s lab.**

Interview notes if in English [photocopy; do not post to web]


**Recommended**


**Week 9: Materialist methods (6 November) – This class will meet in David’s lab.**

**Guest: Angelique Haugerud, Anthropology, Rutgers-New Brunswick**


**Recommended:**


Voice

Week 10: Positionality (13 November)

Guests: Abena Busia, English, Rutgers-New Brunswick
Walton Johnson, Africana Studies, Rutgers-New Brunswick


Recommended


Week 11: Collaboration and criticism (20 November)

Guests: Richard Schroeder, Geography, Rutgers-New Brunswick
Genese Sodikoff, Anthropology, Rutgers-Newark


Correspondence related the above article.

Sodikoff, Genese. Reading to be announced.

**Week 12: Reflexivity and story-telling (27 November)**


Recommended:


**Week 13: Afro-pessimism (4 December)**


Recommended


**Week 14: Student paper presentations (11 December)**

*Papers are due Thursday 14 December by 4pm.*